

SCAG's Comments on Draft California Transportation Plan

TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE ATTACHMENT #4.1

Thursday, March 6, 2003

REPORT

DATE: February 17, 2003

TO: Transportation & Communications Committee

FROM: Bob Huddy, Senior Transportation Planner, Planning and Policy
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RE: **Connecting Californians-California Transportation Plan 2025**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL:



RECOMMENDATION:

Direct staff to prepare a letter, for signature by the Executive Director, and comments to Caltrans on the California Transportation Plan addressing SCAG's issues and concerns with the Draft Plan.

BACKGROUND:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is in the process of developing a draft statewide transportation plan: Connecting Californians-California Transportation Plan 2025 (CTP). This document is developing a statewide transportation vision for 2025. Caltrans has released an overview of the Plan and a draft for internal release. SCAG staff was requested to review this document for the Highway & Long Range Finance Task Force and report back.

The CTP attempts to delineate a number of goals and policies, setting a broad strategic direction on what the important transportation issues facing the state are and how to address them. Currently, the CTP is out in a draft form for comments and review. Public hearings are scheduled through the end of February 2003 to take comment on this draft.

The CTP is not an action plan. Specific project or program level detail of how the CTP would be carried out is not contained within this document. In addition, by statute, specific projects may not be included in the CTP.

SCAG's Recommended Position

Staff recommend that the CTP continue to recognize and support the regional planning processes, support the key goals and policies of the Regional Transportation Plan, and promote state policies to provide for and support implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan. Staff would also recommend a strong linkage between the development of any subsequent action plans and the Regional Transportation Plans, including, as applicable, specific priorities regarding policies, programs, and projects.

Specific Issues with the CTP

- The CTP in its introduction makes statements on the commitments to relieving traffic congestion and preserving the system that allude to the Traffic Congestion Relief Program (TCRP) that Governor Davis proposed in July 2000. These “commitments” seem to form a significant component of the underlying premise on which the CTP is developed. Yet, there is no substantive discussion on the status of these commitments. Given the current status of the State budget, and the uncertainty specifically with regard to full funding of the TCRP, it is doubtful that these can, at this time, be considered as commitments. Thus, the basis for the implicit assumption of the TCRP commitments may need to be revisited, as an underlying CTP assumption.
- Collaborative planning and decision making was identified as a key policy. The discussion of this policy does little to note existing collaborative processes mandated through state and federal law and regulation. The strategies identified in relation to this policy simply restate the existing State and Regional processes, in place and required by current established policy. This creates an impression that these processes are either not already in place, or are somehow not functioning adequately. If there are collaborative processes that may need improvement, there is little that specifically points to those perceived or actual deficiencies or recommendations for new improvements.
- Issues of finance and funding are identified, and the serious and continuing erosion of transportation funding is noted as a significant problem. The present CTP draft document contains limited specific direction on the necessary policy actions or strategies to alleviate the funding problem. The CTP mentions the role of local funding sources, including local sales taxes, in meeting the needs of the multi-modal transportation system, but the analysis of the issues associated with local financing is also quite limited. Increased private sector investment in transportation is identified as a potential funding strategy, as are user-based funding mechanisms, which are consistent with broad principles in the RTP. Details on what those mechanisms might be, or the level of effort necessary to meet future maintenance and capacity enhancement are lacking.
- The issue of financial resources lacks much specific connection to policy and decision-making processes referred to in Policy 1. Clearly, there does exist a situation of economic and financial uncertainty in the funding processes that creates uncertainty in the existing decision making processes. This financial uncertainty does result in impacts to things like project delivery, and the ability to meet conformity requirements in National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
- Changes in strategic directions to implement the goals and policies are contained in the draft CTP document. But, there is little, in the CTP, as yet, to focus on which policies and strategies would be a priority. The magnitude of expected growth and demand upon the

transportation system, limitations on resources, and many competing public values to be balanced are well documented, but not well linked back to what policies and strategies should receive priority in dealing with them.

- Staff also received comments from an RTP TAC member who expressed a concern with lack of focus on core travel modes. It is noted that while CTP is a multi-modal document, and it does and should promote alternative modes. However, the comment staff received noted significant detailed attention is focused on relatively small segment modes of travel at what was perceived as a lack of similar attention to needs of primary modes (e.g. highways). Staff concurs that very significant growth in goods movement and personal travel in rural and urban areas will occur in the next 25 years, using our highway network, and more detailed attention could be focused on this issue.

Summary of the CTP Goals and Objectives

Connecting Californians-California Transportation Plan 2025 contains five specific goals:

Goal 1 Enhance Public Safety and Security

Ensuring the safety and security of people, goods, information, and services in all modes of transportation. Integrating new technologies when designing system infrastructure and developing coordinated security and response plans.

Goal 2 Preserve the Transportation System

Maintaining and rehabilitating California's extensive transportation system to preserve in for future generations.

Goal 3 Improve Mobility and Accessibility

Expanding the system and enhancing modal choices and connectivity to meet the state's future transportation demands.

Goal 4 Maximize Efficient Use of Resources

Planning and providing transportation services while protecting our environment and historical and cultural assets. Maximizing the efficient use of resources including land and energy consumption.

Goal 5 Reflect Community and Environmental Values

Finding transportation solutions that balance and integrate community aesthetic, and environmental values with transportation safety and performance.

The draft of Connecting Californians-California Transportation Plan 2025 contains a total of seven policies to carry out the goals set forth.

- Policy 1 Expand opportunities for early and ongoing collaboration during the planning and decision making processes.
- Policy 2 Maintain, manage, and preserve a safe and secure transportation system.
- Policy 3 Develop, manage, and operate an efficient, inter-connected, and intermodal transportation system.
- Policy 4 Manage growth and conserve resources.
- Policy 5 Enhance capacity and provide viable transportation choices.
- Policy 6 Provide additional and more flexible transportation financing.
- Policy 7 Support research to advance mobility and accessibility.

General SCAG Committee and Staff Comments on the CTP

The draft CTP identifies many issues, including population growth, changes in demand on our transportation system from increased population, domestic and international trade, and a historic increased propensity for travel. The CTP contains a substantive review of the changing demographics of the state, the effects of urban growth, the changing needs of rural regions. The CTP acknowledges changes in our security situation, safety, technology, the growth of non-work travel, and other trends that will need to be factored into our planning for the State's transportation needs. The document reflects many of the concerns, goals, and objectives contained in SCAG's 2001 RTP, and now being developed for the 2004 Draft RTP.

The CTP draws attention to critical problems. The CTP outlines a number of very serious issues facing California, but, as it is revised, it needs to focus more clearly on what the strategies identified will do to implement the broad policies presented. A clearer sense of the order of priority in the goals and the policies, with a clearer link to strategies as the means to implement those policies would make the document both more forceful in its style and message.

Caltrans staff presented an overview of the CTP at the January Transportation & Communications Committee (TCC) meeting. At the TCC meeting a number of issues regarding the CTP were raised, with transportation finance being a very serious concern, affecting overall viability of the CTP as a planning document.

Various SCAG staff, including finance and goods movement, have reviewed the CTP documents and supplied comments on aspects of those areas of the CTP. Staff have also received comments

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from a member of the RTP TAC regarding the CTP. Staff will continue to monitor the ongoing CTP process, as it evolves and continue to report back as needed on the issues affecting the CTP and the SCAG Region.

Next Steps

SCAG staff will continue to monitor the development of the CTP process, update the TCC, and seek further direction, as appropriate.

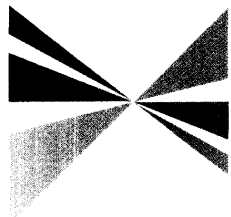
FISCAL IMPACT:

Funding to review and comment on the CTP are contained in the FY 02/03 OWP, no new fiscal impacts.



March 5, 2003

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



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DRAFT

Subject: California Transportation Plan 2025

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the Southern California Association of Governments, I am writing to submit comment that our staff has prepared on the California Transportation Plan.

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the six county Southern California region, SCAG is charged with creating the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) in close consultation with Caltrans. The RTP is the product of a "consensus based" regional planning process that will help to guide the growth and meet the future transportation needs of the Southern California region. In addition, the RTP is a critical element in meeting the conformity requirements of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Thus, SCAG has a critical interest in working with Caltrans in assuring consistency between the RTP and the CTP.

SCAG strongly supports the effort that Caltrans is making in developing a Statewide vision for transportation. SCAG recognizes the importance in working closely with Caltrans to build a strong consensus for dealing with the challenges of growth facing both our region and the State. SCAG staff have reviewed the CTP Draft and have developed comments on the goals, policies and strategies contained, therein. We hope that these comments will be of assistance in refining the Draft CTP.

SCAG looks forward to a continued close relationship between the regional planning process and the development of the CTP. Please either myself or contact our staff with any questions, or for such assistance SCAG can provide, as you refine the CTP.

Sincerely,

Mark Pisano
Executive Director

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